

## 84 CHARING CROSS ROAD

### SIDE A - HELENE

HELENE: What kind of black Protestant Bible is this? Kindly inform the Church of England they have loused up the most beautiful prose ever written, whoever told them to tinker with the Vulgate Latin. They'll burn for it, you mark my words. It's nothing to me, I'm Jewish myself. But I have a Catholic sister-in-law, a Methodist sister-in-law, a whole raft of Presbyterian cousins and an Aunt who's a Christian Science healer, and I like to think *none* of them would countenance this Anglican Latin Bible if they knew it existed. As it happens they don't know Latin existed. Well, the hell with it. I've been using my Latin teacher's Vulgate, what I imagine I'll do is just not give it back till you find me one of my own. I enclose four dollars to cover the three dollars eighty-eight due to you, buy yourself a cup of coffee with the twelve cents. There's no post office near here and I'm not running all the way to Rockefeller Plaza to stand in line for a three-dollar-eighty-eight money order. If I wait till I get down there for something else, I won't have the three dollars eighty-eight anymore. I have implicit faith in the U.S. Airmail and His Majesty's Postal System.

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### SIDE B - HELENE

HELENE: Mr Doel! WHAT KIND OF A PEPYS' DIARY DO YOU CALL THIS? This is not Pepys' Diary, this is some busy-body editor's miserable collection of EXCERPTS from Pepys' Diary may he rot. I could just spit. Where is January twelfth, 1688, where his wife chased him out of bed and around the bedroom with a red-hot poker? Where is Sir William Penn's son that was giving everybody so much trouble with his Quaker notions? ONE mention does he get in this whole pseudo book. And me from Philadelphia! I enclose two limp singles. I will make do with this thing until you find me a real Pepys'. THEN I will tear up this ersatz book, page by page, and WRAP THINGS IN IT! *[sudden change of tone]* Fresh eggs or powdered for Christmas? I know the powdered last longer but "fresh eggs flown from Denmark" have to taste better. You want to take a vote on it?

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### SIDE C - FRANK

FRANK: Dear Miss Hanff, First of all let me apologize for the Samuel Pepys' Diary. I was honestly under the impression that it was the complete Braybrooke edition and I can understand how you must have felt when you found your favorite passages missing. I promise to look at the next reasonably priced copy that comes along and if it contains the passages you mention in your letter I will send it along. I am glad to say, I am very glad to say, I have managed to dig out a few books for you from a private library that we have just bought. There is a Leigh Hunt which includes most of the essays you like. There is also a Vulgate New Testament which I hope will be (*in an American accent*) okay. I have also included a Dictionary to the Vulgate which you might find useful. There is also a volume of twentieth-century English essays, though it contains only one by Hilaire Belloc\*—and nothing to do with bathrooms. Enclosed is our invoice for seventeen shillings and sixpence or approximately . . . (*In his excitement and guilt he still can't think clearly*) Two dollars fifty! All that is due to us on the books, as you had a credit balance with us of nearly two dollars. About the eggs—I have talked to the rest of the *inmates* here, and we all seem to think that the fresh ones would be nicer . . . as you say, they will not last as long, but they will taste...ah...much, ah much...better. We are all hoping for better things after the General Election. If Churchill and Company get in, as I think and hope they will, it will cheer everyone up immensely. With best wishes, Yours sincerely, Frank Doel.

\*pronounced hill-AIR bell-OAK

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### SIDE C - OTHERS (ONE ACTOR)

- CECILY: Dear Miss Hanff! Please don't let Frank know I'm writing this but every time I send you a bill I've been dying to slip in a little note and he might not think it quite proper of me. That sounds stuffy and he's not, he's quite nice really, very nice in fact, it's just that he does rather look on you as his private correspondent as all your letters and parcels are addressed to him. We all love your letters and try to imagine what you must be like. I've decided you're young and very sophisticated and smart-looking. Old Mr. Martin thinks you must be quite studious-looking in spite of your wonderful sense of humor. Why don't you send us a snapshot? Everyone was so grateful for the parcel. My little ones — girl five, boy four — were in Heaven. With the raisins and the eggs I was able to make them a *cake!* I hope you don't mind my writing. Please don't mention it when you write to Frank. With best wishes, Cecily Farr. P.S. I shall put my home address on the back in case you should ever want anything sent to you from London.
- MEGAN: Dear Miss Hanff: This is just to let you know that your Easter parcels to Marks and Company arrived safely a few days ago but have not been acknowledged as Frank Doel is away from the office on business for the firm. I did feel I must write and tell you how exceedingly grateful we all are for your kindness and generosity. We all hope that you will be able to come to England one of these days. We should do our best to make your trip a happy one. Sincerely, Megan Wells.
- MAXINE: Dear-heart—it is the loveliest old shop straight out of Dickens, you would go absolutely out of your mind about it. There are stalls outside and I stopped and leafed through a few things just to establish myself as a browser before wandering in. It's dim inside, you smell the shop before you see it; it's a lovely smell, I can't articulate it easily but it combines must and dust and age, and walls of wood. Towards the back of the shop at the left there's a desk with a worklamp on it. A man was sitting there. He was about sixty, with a Hogarth nose. He looked up and said, "Good afternoon," in a North Country accent, and I said I just wanted to browse and he said please do. I stayed for about half an hour hoping your Frank or one of the girls would turn up, but it was one-ish when I went in. I gather they were all out to lunch and I couldn't stay any longer.